

VOLKSWAGEN

AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT

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The spoken word applies

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen -

I am convinced that design will be a key factor in deciding which car brands are to survive in the future. I admit that this is a rather provocative thesis. Matthias Müller has just spoken about how intensively the Volkswagen Group is working on the future. Our cars will suddenly drive themselves, they will drive silently and they may even not belong to us anymore. This leads us to a question: will the things about a car that fascinate us today still fascinate us in future or will they simply disappear? Will the car degenerate into a simple means of transport over the next few years? All of that does not sound particularly exciting or attractive. But I can reassure you. Precisely the opposite will happen. We will develop new technologies, we will find new ways of using cars – The automobile will not lose its Fascination! Why am I so convinced? Because three terms will never lose their importance: Beauty, innovation and, perhaps most important, emotion.

For example, let us take a look at this building. You immediately have a feeling of intensity, of passion. A feeling that moves you in your innermost depths. And that is certainly not because the concrete used in this building was mixed with special love and care. But because a designer, an architect called Frank Gehry, designed this building with passion. Only he had the fantasy and imagination to create precisely this design, precisely this work of art. For me, this building is highly emotional. It has a seductive beauty and an innovative aura. This is why I am so pleased to be able to talk about design today in this particular building.

Beauty – innovation – emotion... Three key terms. They define character and originality and therefore also the value of a product and the attraction it creates. Beauty is a magic value. Biologists even speak of a basic function of life.

In the case of automobiles, it is not their fitness for purpose but their beauty that decides whether they are eventually scrapped or command high prices at auctions.

Innovation only becomes evident to people through a well-thought-out design. And innovation is much more than just innovative technology. For example, let us take the Bauhaus movement. The architecture and design movement of the 20th century. The architects and designers involved in this movement were committed to radical rethinking. They were far ahead of their times. But their work not only led to a fundamental change in architecture and product design; their visions also had a sustained long-term influence on the surroundings in which people live.

Creative people – whether they are architects or designers – are never satisfied. They are always searching for the better product, The innovation, and, in the final resort, for an even better future. Emotion determines our entire life. Emotion accounts for more than half of our brain. We take 90 percent of our decisions emotionally, on the basis of feelings. Of course, this also applies to the way we choose a car. I, you, all of us – this is the way people are. A car, its shape and its appearance are much more than the sum of a group of algorithms – they are sheer emotion, intensity and passion. They move us in our innermost depths. Design addresses our feelings. A product that generates such emotions will always have an advantage.

Design creates precisely this emotional tie. Not only to a product but also to a brand. If you look at the company, who is it that creates this emotion? Of course it is the designers. That is why I also like to call them the Chief Emotion Officers.

Design means character, design means distinctiveness. One of the key tasks of Group Design is to safeguard. This originality, this distinctiveness, and this unique value – together with the brands.

This applies all the more since there are fewer and fewer people who are regard pure technology as a distinctive criterion. Within the Group, we are involved in a variety of activities to safeguard the unique character of each brand. Our Design Criteria form one of the main elements. They define the genetic code of our brands – clear, unambiguous and characteristic.

It would be beyond the scope of my presentation to explain in detail the design criteria that apply to each individual brand. As an example, let us just take a look at two brands which can define or change the character of a car with only a few lines and, in the final resort, with only two lines.

This works in the same way in the interior. Only a few lines are needed to transform a driver-oriented interior into an interior where equal priority is given to all the seats. In turn, this leads to a clear and unambiguous brand identity. It is the designers who are responsible for Design Criteria, the emotion officers.

In this field, our multi-brand Group has a very special strength a design competence that is unparalleled anywhere in the world. We do not have only one design team. Within our brands, we have 12 highly professional, independent teams. And these teams are also multicultural in a unique way. Our design colleagues come from 45 nations. 45 nations in seven times zones. This means that we can absorb ideas, trends and movements on a global basis and integrate them into our work in a way which virtually no one else in the world can match.

This evening, I am very pleased to note that the chief designers of the brands are present. Your teams create the originality, brand identity and product identity that represent the decisive added value for the Group, today, tomorrow and especially the day after. For us designers, the “day after tomorrow” already started some time ago. Some of the vehicle layouts we are now familiar with will continue to evolve while others will simply disappear. At the same time, completely new layouts will be developed.

To date, we have been very limited by conventional technology. An internal combustion engines is a massive block, whether it is located in the front, the centre or the rear of a vehicle. If we can simply remove this block, we gain tremendous freedom.

If we can also throw out the transmission, the tank and the exhaust system, the possibilities are tremendous.

To date, we have worked within the possibilities offered by technology. Now we have a technology that offers entirely new possibilities. What is an electric car at the end of the day? It is a skateboard with a battery in the center, a compact drive system at the front or rear and four wheels at its corners. We can work with these possibilities – with entirely new freedom. In future, there will be no restrictions on the use of space. With this new technology of possibilities, we have already developed an entire universe of ideas.

In the context of this new world, we have worked on a whole variety of scenarios and aspects. We can therefore cover the mobility of tomorrow and “the day after tomorrow”.

Let us take a look at this universe. and in particular the universe of the family. Let us look at a future vehicle for a young family. Why should a child not sit in the front? This would be inconceivable nowadays. A child could sit In front of its parents, with the best possible view of the outside world, literally in the “front row”.

That may sound rather provoking: but there would be no risk at all because the car would be driven autonomously, without accidents.

And if the child gets bored, the windows can be transformed into aquariums or the houses in the surroundings can become living dinosaurs – thanks to augmented reality!

We will have this “technology of possibilities” available – tomorrow and most certainly the day after tomorrow – and we will put it to extremely creative use. But how can we reach this point? Quite simply: by placing people at the centre! That does sound quite simple but the freer we become as a result of the new technologies, the better and more consistently will we be able to adapt vehicles to the individual lifestyles and personal wishes of people. Our Future Centers offer the best prerequisites for this approach. Here, designers and digitalization specialists not only cooperate closely, they live in a shared world of the imagination with people at its centre. At this point, I would like to welcome the Heads of Design of the Future Centers.

At these centers, we have an opportunity to radically rethink the automobile and to develop new conceptions of mobility – with the privilege – for which I am very thankful – that we are not exposed to the everyday pressures involved in the development of production models. Here, we have the freedom for visions. We need to lay the foundations for these visions today so that they can determine the success of our company tomorrow and, especially, the day after tomorrow.

No one knows how long it will take to realize such visions. No one can say today how fast and how dramatic this transformation will actually be. This is where we can bring the true strength of our Group to bear in an entirely new way. In this context, our multi-brand strategy will make us faster, more flexible and significantly more agile.

Some brands will forge ahead and others will benefit so that we can adapt perfectly to people's needs and developments in the marketplace.

Nevertheless – and as a designer I must say this – beauty, innovation and emotion will continue to matter – in fact they will matter more than ever before – they will become more important. We will not have uniform autonomous vehicles – on the contrary, the scene on the roads of the future will become even more varied, even more colorful, even more emotional.

Within the Volkswagen Group, we are putting all our efforts into this future. Design will be one of the driving forces. We will put the technology of possibilities to intensive use in a highly creative way.

At the beginning, I promised you an exciting new world of mobility. I am convinced that we will keep this promise.

Thank you!
